

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for use in a conference arrangement comprising the steps of:

enabling a plurality of participants in a group to participate in an ongoing conference;

automatically collecting participation information of each of said participants in said group, by monitoring the states of communication devices associated with said participants and making that information available to all participants;

automatically determining which of said participants in said group are currently active in said conference; and

dynamically displaying a visual representation indicating which of said participants in said group are active in said conference;

wherein different ones of said participants in said group may be in different participation modes at a given point in time, the participation modes including at least an active mode in which a given participant is currently active in said conference and a monitor mode in which the given participant is monitoring said conference but is not currently active in said conference;

wherein the step of automatically collecting participation information by monitoring the states of communication devices associated with said participants further comprises monitoring the states of communication devices associated with said participants regardless of whether particular ones of said participants are in the active mode or the monitor mode; and

wherein the step of dynamically displaying a visual representation indicating which of said participants in said group are active in said conference further comprises dynamically displaying a visual representation comprising participation history information indicative of which of the participation modes particular ones of said participants have been in at certain points in time.

2. (Original) The method as defined in claim 1 further including a step of enabling participants of said group not currently active in said conference to monitor said conference.

3. (Original) The method as defined in claim 2 further including a step of enabling said participants monitoring said conference to become active in said conference.

4. (Original) The method as defined in claim 2 further including a step of enabling said participants monitoring said conference to listen to said conference.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The method as defined in claim 1 further including a step of automatically collecting information on whether said active participants have spoken in said conference.

7. (Original) The method as defined in claim 1 further including a step of automatically collecting information regarding prior conference participation of each of said participants.

8. (Original) The method as defined in claim 7 wherein said prior participation information includes at least whether a participant was active in the conference.

9. (Original) The method as defined in claim 8 wherein said prior participation information further includes whether a participant spoke in the conference.

10. (Original) The method as defined in claim 7 wherein said step of collecting participation information includes a step of collecting information on whether a participant has been active and/or an actual speaker in the conference during the conference.

11. (Previously presented) The method as defined in claim 7 wherein said step of collecting participation information further includes a step of collecting said participation information for prescribed intervals of said conference.

12. (Original) The method as defined in claim 11 wherein said prescribed intervals include at least each day of the conference interval, each hour of each said day, each minute of each of said hours and each second of each of said minutes.

13. (Currently amended) Apparatus for use in a conference arrangement comprising:

a set up unit to enable a plurality of participants in a group to participate in an ongoing conference;

a monitor to automatically monitor states of communication devices associated with said participants and make that information available to all participants, and to collect participation information of each of said participants in said group and to automatically determine which of said participants in said group are currently active in said conference; and

a display unit to dynamically display a visual representation indicating which of said participants in said group are active in said conference;

wherein said set up unit is configured such that different ones of said participants in said group may be in different participation modes at a given point in time, the participation modes including at least an active mode in which a given participant is currently active in said conference and a monitor mode in which the given participant is monitoring said conference but is not currently active in said conference;

wherein said monitor is configured to monitor the states of communication devices associated with said participants regardless of whether particular ones of said participants are in the active mode or the monitor mode; and

wherein the display unit is configured to dynamically display a visual representation comprising participation history information indicative of which of the participation modes particular ones of said participants have been in at certain points in time.

14. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 13 wherein said set up unit further enables participants of said group not currently active in said conference to monitor said conference.

15. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 14 wherein said set up unit further enables said participants monitoring said conference to become active in said conference.

16. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 14 wherein said set up unit further enables said participants monitoring said conference to listen to said conference.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 13 wherein said monitor further automatically collects information on whether said active participants have spoken in said conference.

19. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 18 wherein said monitor further automatically collects information regarding prior conference participation of each of said participants.

20. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 19 wherein said prior participation information includes at least whether a participant was active in the conference.

21. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 20 wherein said prior participation information further includes whether a participant spoke in the conference.

22. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 21 wherein said monitor further automatically collects information on whether a participant has been active and/or an actual speaker in the conference during the conference.

23. (Previously presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 22 wherein said monitor further automatically collects said participation information for prescribed intervals of said conference.

24. (Original) The apparatus as defined in claim 22 wherein said prescribed intervals include at least each day of the conference interval, each hour of each said day, each minute of each of said hours and each second of each of said minutes.

25-29. (Canceled)